

Washington State Patrol Media Release

Chief Ronal W. Serpas



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Statement of Chief Ronal W. Serpas on City of Tacoma Criminal Investigation

"The last several months have been an incredibly painful time for the families touched by this tragedy, the City of Tacoma, its residents, and the dedicated men and women of the Tacoma Police Department. I hope that today we are one step closer to resolution.

On Friday, May 2, 2003, the Washington State Patrol was asked to conduct a criminal investigation by the City of Tacoma. The initial scope of the investigation was to determine if there was criminal activity involved in regards to Catherine Woodard in her position as assistant police chief for the City of Tacoma, and to follow leads wherever they would take us in regard to any criminal misconduct.

On Monday, May 5th, three State Patrol detectives were brought in to Tacoma and assigned to the investigation. The leads, tips, names of witnesses, and information began to pour in to our investigative team. By the following Monday, May 12th, I increased the number of staff assigned to five full-time detectives, two part-time detectives, and two part-time support staff. The investigation concluded just over six months later.

The detectives involved in the investigation came from Vancouver, Spokane, Seattle, and Olympia.

First and foremost, I want to thank the men and women of our Criminal Investigation Division for their skill and professionalism in conducting this investigation, under the leadership of Captain Brian Ursino and Lieutenant Grant Hulteen. I also wish to thank the Attorney General's Office, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the FBI, the Pierce County Prosecutor's Office, the Pierce County Sheriff's Office, and the Gig Harbor Police Department for their assistance.

Our investigators spent **6,648 hours** on this case (or 554 12-hour shifts), following every lead or tip, **interviewing 86 people** who had information relevant to the investigation. They took **98 statements from witnesses** in the case. The case file is over **6,505 pages** and consists of at least **17 three-inch binders** of documentation. As you can see here on the tables, there are 12 addendum books, 2 statement books, 1 allegation book, 1 book containing the detectives' report, and 1 criminal complaint book.

Our Computer Crimes detectives spent over 200 hours analyzing **14 gigabytes of e-mail, or thousands of individual e-mail documents, stored on 90 CDs**. These detectives also fully analyzed **6 computer hard drives, containing 214 gigabytes** of data. Further, **165 pieces of**

evidence were collected and reviewed, such as computers, photographs, videotapes, surveillance CDs and videos, handwritten documents, and phone records.

Investigators followed every lead and every piece of evidence known to them. The estimated cost of the investigation just to the WSP was **\$203,440**.

I am confident that the investigation we turned over to the Attorney General was thorough, exhaustive, and complete given what was known to our detectives. I also have full confidence that the Attorney General's Office carefully and thoroughly reviewed our investigation, and we support the decision of the Attorney General.

However, based upon information uncovered during our criminal investigation, there are several allegations identified that require further administrative investigation; actions if proven true, may be violations of Tacoma Police Department and/or City of Tacoma Rules and Policies:

- Unsatisfactory Performance
- Unbecoming Conduct
- Discrimination/Harassment
- Conflicting/Illegal Orders
- Immoral Conduct
- Conformance to Laws
- Failure to Investigate Domestic Violence
- Conducting Personal Business on Duty
- Use of Department Equipment
- Failure to Supervise
- Improper Evidence Handling
- Untruthfulness

The vast majority of the men and women of the Tacoma Police Department perform their duties in a professional and dedicated way. I appreciate the commitment the city leaders have expressed to determine the truth and hold those accountable for not upholding their duties and establishing controls that will prevent the type of misconduct that may have occurred. However, the major administrative issues that Attorney General Gregoire and I have outlined warrant the immediate attention of Tacoma City leaders."

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